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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT SATURDAY, July 2, 1938.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "VEGETABLE AND VITAMIN NEWS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Nobody with a vegetable garden needs to go shy on vitamin C at this time of year--nobody, that is, who serves vegetables fresh from the garden and cooks them to conserve the vitamin. For freshly harvested vegetables are very rich in C--vegetables such as cabbage, spinach, green peppers, parsnips, turnips, green peas, lima beans, tomatoes, even horseradish. The New York State Experiment Station reports that some of these vegetables are as rich in C as that reliable C-standby, orange juice.

As of course you know, C is the vitamin that prevents a disease called scurvy so is usually described as the antiscorbutic vitamin. Everybody needs a steady daily supply of C not only to keep from having scurvy--or symptoms of it, but also to have the best health and most vigor. Not so many years ago our grandparents and great-grandparents expected to suffer from aches and pains and various other ills in late winter and early spring. They didn't know that their so-called "spring rheumatism" came from a long winter of meals that lacked vitamin C. And they didn't know that many of what they called "growing pains" in their children also came from too little C. Today many children who were irritable, lacked stamina and did not grow properly have been cured simply by building up their diets in vitamin C.

So in recent years nutritionists have become especially interested in the problem of saving all possible C in vegetables. Vitamin C is easy to lose or destroy. Between harvesting and eating a vegetable, there may be many a slip in C--from air, heat, exposure, age and so on. The problem has been to trace these losses and learn how to prevent them.

At the New York State and Massachusetts Stations they have been studying the vitamin C in lima beans. To begin with, they found that fresh green lima beans are naturally an exceptionally good source of C, rating as well as orange juice and even better than green peas or tomatoes. But all lima beans are not the same in C. The size of the beans as well as the variety and the way they are stored appear to affect the amount of C. New York workers found that the large-seeded pole varieties of lima beans were richer in C than the large-seeded bush varieties. And they found that in any one variety, the smaller beans had more vitamin C than the large beans in proportion to size. Whether the beans kept their shells on or off also affected the vitamin. Beans stored in their pods held their C much better than those that were shelled. Even when the shelled beans were kept in moisture-proof packages they lost about twice as much of the vitamin as those in the pod. You see why it pays to gather and shell your lima beans just before cooking; or, if you get them at market, to buy them in their shells. Another point to remember is that the refrigerator is a great conserver of vitamin C. Beans waiting on the kitchen table will lose their vitamin C much faster than those kept in a refrigerator.

At the New York Station they have also been studying the vitamin C in cabbage. As you know, raw cabbage has long been suggested as an excellent source of vitamin C, much better than cooked cabbage. But recently the New York workers have found that early varieties of cabbage are richer in C than those harvested late in the fall for winter storage or for kraut making. They have also found that whole heads of raw cabbage slowly lose vitamin C during storage. So the cabbage that you serve for winter meals after several months' storage naturally won't have as much vitamin C as it did in the fall when it first went into the cellar. Cabbage like lima beans loses its C much faster at room temperature than when stored under refrigeration.

You may be interested also to hear that the New York Station made some studies of cooking cabbage and found that when you cook cut or shredded cabbage a good deal of C dissolves in the cooking water. The first few minutes of cooking are the hardest on the C; about a quarter of it gets lost then. After those first few minutes the loss is slight. As for left-over cooked cabbage, better not keep it long even in the refrigerator. Even in a very cold refrigerator cooked cabbage slowly loses its C. At the end of 2 days' storage about half of the C is gone.

At the Massachusetts Station they've been learning about the vitamin C in tomatoes. And again they find that variety has considerable to do with it. They grew on their own experimental plots some 98 varieties or strains of tomatoes. All had exactly the same care and soil treatment. But some varieties were 3 or almost 4 times as rich in vitamin C as others. This may account for the wide differences now existing in the vitamin C strength of different commercial brands of tomato juice. One of these days women who buy tomato juice will be asking for information on the label as to the vitamin C content of the juice and canners will be interested in raising the varieties of tomatoes that are rich in C.

The Massachusetts people found no relation between the size of a tomato and its vitamin C. And they found that ripeness had little to do with it. And as long as the fruits remained firm and sound, the vitamin C was not seriously affected by storage in shipping, in markets or in canneries. Apparently the acid in the tomato protected it from loss of C just as it does in cooking and canning tomatoes.

More vitamin news another day.

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